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SUBJECT: YEMENI PRESIDENT SALEH VISITS ETHIOPIA; MOVE TO  
INCREASE TRILATERAL COOPERATION AMONG YEMEN-ETHIOPIA-SUDAN

Classified By: Ambassador Edmund J. Hull for reasons 1.5 (b and d)

¶11. (c) In a July 27 meeting with the Ambassador, Foreign Minister Qirbi said Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh's recent visit to Ethiopia paved the way for increasing regional cooperation. FM Qirbi deemed President Ali Abdullah Saleh's three day trip successful in terms of strengthening Yemeni-Ethiopian coordination on counter-terrorism, as well as planning for economic development and increased trade. He claimed that the growing tripartite alliance that includes the Sudan is not directed against any country, but is open to all and designed to increase economic cooperation among the HOA countries. He also said that settling disputes by peaceful means (e.g., in Somalia and the Sudan) would be a major function of the alliance. Noting that the Sudan and Ethiopia already have a open trade zone and that the Ethiopian market for Yemeni goods (oil and agricultural products) is about \$120 million, Qirbi said the goal is to eventually have a Free Trade Area (FTA) and to develop a common market. The Ethiopian and Yemeni presidents also met with businessmen to discuss improving the investment environment.

¶12. (c) The Ambassador mentioned General Robeson's recent visit to Yemen (septel), his interest in the HOA, training in Yemen and other countries, and the possibility of future regional exercises. He also asked about Kenya's inclusion in the alliance. According to Qirbi no other specific countries or limitations on cooperation were discussed by the presidents. There is interest, however, in developing stronger ties to Tanzania given the large Tanzanian population in Yemen.

HULL